



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

NOTES ON JUSTUS VAN GHENT

[PLATES VII-VIII]

MANY northern artists worked during the fifteenth century in Italy. This is a strange fact, considering the abundance of great and second-rate artists that was peculiar to this country ever since the dawn of the revival of the fine arts, but there are several passages in literature that force us to recognize the high esteem which was accorded by the Italians of the Renaissance period to the work of Northern artists. Vasari, to be sure, speaks, with very few exceptions, in a tone of contempt of their work; but, notwithstanding the great authority the Arretine enjoyed, his word in this case does not reproduce the general opinion of his times. Most of these northern artists led an obscure existence in Italy, for the great artists of the Netherlands or Germany, like the Van Eycks, Memling, etc., found plenty of work in their own homes, and even if they undertook a journey in foreign parts, they turned back northward as soon as they could. Only mediocre artists left their country for any considerable length of time or even forever. As these wandering artists were not great individualities, their influence on Italian art was slight or entirely unnoticeable. Justus van Ghent forms an exception. This painter, although not one of the greatest names in the annals of the art of the Netherlands, was of more than ordinary talent. When Federigo of Montefeltre, Duke of Urbino, was looking for an artist to decorate his famous library, he chose Justus (or Josse; the Italians called him Giusto; his family name was Van Wassenhoven,¹ and not Snevoet, as used to be asserted and still is asserted in Bryan's *Dictionary of Painters*), who was "peritissimo nel pitturare in

¹ According to the conjecture of M. Hulin.

olio." Master Justus painted then the 28 ideal portraits of great scholars of antiquity and early Christian times, together with those of great Italian poets, for this library, and perhaps some allegorical figures, which are, however, in my opinion, more likely by Melozzo da Forlì. He also painted a "Communion of the Apostles," this last being the only picture by his hand which still remains in Urbino, the others having been carried away after the bankruptcy of the della Rovere family, the heirs of the Montefeltre. Notwithstanding the high praise bestowed upon our master by Vasari, Justus' personality is at present very problematic. The intention of the following notes is to call attention to some hitherto unrecognized works by Justus and thus to throw some new light on this obscure figure in the history of art.

The material at one's disposal for the study of the art of Justus van Ghent has consisted until now of the above-mentioned 28 ideal portraits (14 in the Louvre, 14 in the Barberini Gallery, Rome), the portrait of Federigo Montefeltre with young Guidobaldo (Barberini Gallery), and the "Communion of the Apostles" in the Urbino Gallery. The allegorical figures of the Arts (now in Berlin, Windsor, and London) I consider, with Schmarsow (*Melozzo da Forlì*, 1886), Bode (Burckhardt's *Cicerone*, 9th ed.), and others, against Voll (*Geschichte der altniederländischen Malerei*, 1906, and *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, 1897), as the work of Melozzo da Forlì.¹ No literary document relating to Justus has come to us, except a few insignificant bills in Urbino (relating to the "Communion" picture and a lost gonfalone which Justus was to paint for a confraternity; the first picture was also painted for such a religious community), and a fragment in the Ghent archives. Although Giovanni Santi, the father of Raphael, must have known Justus, he does not mention him in his otherwise circumstantial chronicle of the life and deeds of Federigo. We do not know where or when he was born, where or when he died, whose pupil he was, or where else he had worked. The only established date from his life is, that in the year 1474 he finished the "Communion

¹ Repeated careful study of the Berlin panels convinced me, however, that they were executed with the help of Justus. The technique is his, although the design is Melozzo's.

of the Apostles" in Urbino. That he was court painter to Federigo we know from Vasari and from the fact that the duke had his portrait painted by him twice, once on the "Communion," and once for the library of the ducal palace in Urbino, this latter being now preserved in the Barberini Gallery in Rome. This is not much, but we can infer from it that Justus must have been of extraordinary artistic attainments,¹ for Federigo was not only a munificent patron of art, but also a man who understood how to choose his artists with remarkably good taste. We find among the list of artists employed by the court of Urbino in his day some of the most illustrious names of the early Italian Renaissance, Piero degli Franceschi, Melozzo da Forlì, Francesco and Luciano Laurana, and others. Justus was in Urbino at the same time when Piero and Melozzo were working there, and through them, I venture to say, he exercised an influence on Central Italian art that makes itself felt down to the early works of Raphael. Some of Piero's paintings show distinct reminiscences of Justus' types, as for instance the shepherds and St. Joseph in the London "Nativity," certain figures in the Urbino "Flagellation," and so on. It seems to have been proved that the hands of Federigo da Montefeltre in Piero's Altarpiece in the Brera gallery in Milan were painted by Justus. Several of Melozzo's pictures are still considered by highly respectable students as Justus' works, and his prophets in the dome of the Santa Casa in Loreto are evidently inspired by Justus' ideal portraits for the Urbino library.²

The indirect, but quite clearly recognizable, influence Justus exercised through these two great masters on the development of Central Italian painting might be further demonstrated by examination of the work of their pupils, Signorelli and Giovanni Santi, and the early pictures of Raphael. But this would take us too far. My intention is simply to point out the

¹ This is also confirmed by an examination of the "Communion." It is, in spite of some awkwardness in the figures, a highly original composition, excellent in the characterization of the apostles and the solemnity of expression, and majestic in its acridity. It has been blamed for disproportion in figures and space. This is a fault common to all early Flemish masters, not excepting Jan van Eyck.

² Mention should be made of the drawings of Raphael, in the Venice sketch book, after the ideal portraits of the Urbino library.

importance — singularly overlooked up to the present day — of Justus van Ghent in the history of art.

I have been so fortunate as to detect a painting (PLATE VII) in the municipal collection at Trevi, near Foligno, which bears the strongest resemblance to the work of Justus. This is a tempera picture on canvas in a very sad state of preservation, injured by fire and water. The frame, which seems to be the original one, has a semicircular crest, containing in the centre a roundel with Christ of the Resurrection and two flying angels on its sides, painted in the manner of the Foligno school of painting of the Quattrocento, and especially reminding one of Pierantonio Mezzastris. The attribution of this picture to Justus van Ghent seems to be justified on account of the great affinity of coloring, types, and drawing to the Urbino picture. It appears to be earlier in date, however, and it must have been painted soon after the artist's coming to Italy (he was called to Italy probably in the course of the year 1468). It is cool in colors and very precise in the drawing of the faces and hands. The features of the Madonna resemble the type of Hugo van der Goes. The stumpy hands with the flat finger-tips are the same as in Urbino. Not much can be said of the drapery, for it has been altogether robbed of its original aspect through the washing off of its modelling. The canvas is about 1.30 m. high, and 0.75 m. wide.¹ The Urbino panel was painted during the years 1469–1474, and it still shows the genuine Flemish characteristics of its author, unchanged by Italian atmosphere.²

¹ It should be remarked that the face of the magus kneeling to the right and the head of the Christ-child have been carelessly repainted. The round table with the chalice is also due to restoration.

² In the woman with a child on her right arm (near the group of men surrounding the duke), we evidently have to do with a portrait of Battista Sforza, the consort of Federigo da Montefeltre, a presumption which can be justified by a careful comparison of this picture with the portrait of the duchess painted by Piero degli Franceschi, and at the present time preserved in the Uffizi in Florence. The features are the same; notice the peculiar shape of the nose. The child is the son of Federigo, the future duke Guidobaldo, who was born in the year 1472. A comparison of the work of the two artists, Piero and Justus, shows also how the Flemish painter succeeded in conveying a more natural and winsome idea of the duchess than did Piero. The portrait by the latter looks almost stiff and lifeless in its coldness and severity, compared to that by the former. At the same time we must admit that Piero's work is broader and more monumental, and his composition more skilful and impressive. Justus' portrait is almost lost among the bystanders in the picture.

The Trevi picture is also absolutely pure in its Flemish appearance. There are several reasons which will induce one to fix its date before that of the "Communion of the Apostles." The latter shows greater skill in composition and is superior in the firmness of drawing. In the former, nothing has been preserved of the background from which the figures jut forth, and the star in a square on the top of the picture is a coarse addition of later times. This canvas shows, even more clearly than the picture in Urbino, the artistic parentage of Justus van Ghent, the studio of Hugo van der Goes. The type of the Madonna, as stated before, and that of Joseph are the creations of Hugo. This can easily be seen by comparison with works of this artist; for example, the Portinari Triptych in the Uffizi or the "Death of the Virgin" in the Academy at Bruges.

As another hitherto unrecognized work of Justus van Ghent I regard the large tapestry (PLATE VIII) recently given by Mrs. J. H. Wright to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. This tapestry was reproduced in the *Bulletin* of the Museum for February, 1909. Although this reproduction is far from being satisfactory, it enables the attentive examiner to detect such peculiarities as to make it quite certain that the design for the tapestry was furnished by the same master who painted the "Communion of the Apostles." (The tapestry represents in four compartments, divided by eight columns with Gothic capitals, the Creation of Eve, the Baptism of Christ, the Nativity, and the Crucifixion; below these are figures of prophets and apostles.) The Christ's head is exactly the same as in Urbino. The treatment of the hair, falling in rich locks on the shoulders, is the same in this head as in that of the Christ in the Urbino picture and in the picture at Trevi (cf. especially the Magus kneeling to the left of the Virgin). There are no reasons for placing this design after the Italian journey of our master. One is rather inclined to place it before, considering the awkwardly crowded composition and the clumsy arrangement of the draperies. There is something youthfully fresh about the whole, in spite of the apparent faults.

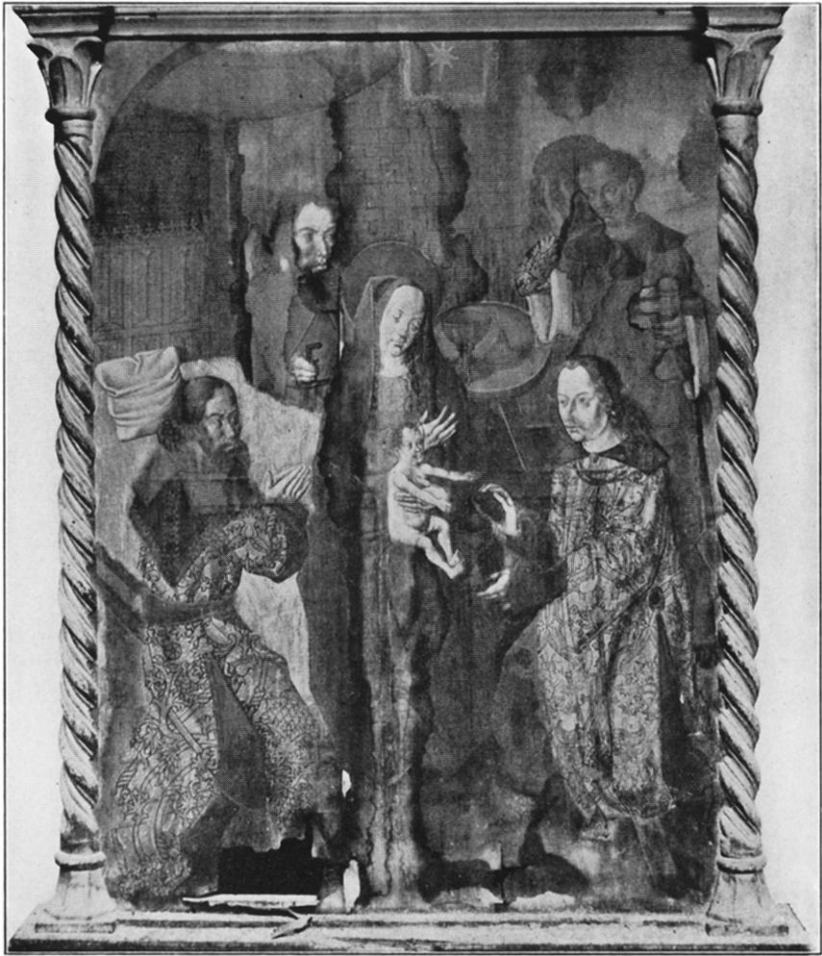
It is a remarkable fact that this rare master preserved his national characteristics to such an extent as we have seen, amid an artistic environment that was one of the most brilliant the Ital-

ian Renaissance produced. Instead of taking from the famous artists that worked in Urbino, Justus gave to them, though nothing very great, so that we are still in a position to distinguish his traces. Some writers on art have endeavored to prove that the art of Justus van Ghent became, under the sunny sky of the South, a medley of Flemish training and Italian influences. As proofs of this assertion they mention the four Liberal Arts in London, Windsor, and Berlin. These pictures, however, no attentive student of the question will be able to retain as Justus' work; as has been said above, so far as invention and design are concerned, they are by Melozzo da Forlì.

MORTON H. BERNATH.

NOTE. — After a careful examination of all accessible photographs of Flemish pictures of the fifteenth century, I find that the type of Epiphany represented in the Trevi picture does not occur again in Flemish art. The same is the case with the Urbino panel. This is a very good proof for the authorship of Justus van Ghent, who must have painted the Epiphany in Italy, where he was not bound by tradition in any way. Every student of Northern art knows how the artists of the Netherlands, during the fifteenth century and the first decades of the sixteenth century, held to the traditional types in representing this scene. There is a "Rogier van der Weyden" type; there is a "Hugo van der Goes" type, "Memling" type, etc. Cf. Kehrér, *Die Anbetung der heiligen drei Könige in Literatur und Kunst*, Vol. II, 1908, Leipsic. On page 332 I mention the banner which Justus van Ghent painted for the Confraternity of Corpus Christi at Urbino as lost. After I wrote the preceding article, I found a canvas in Germany which I believe to be the banner in question. I intend to publish it with additional observations relating to Justus as soon as possible in this JOURNAL.

M. H. B.



EPIPHANY AT TREVİ BY JUSTUS VAN GHENT



TAPESTRY IN BOSTON, DESIGNED BY JUSTUS VAN GHENT